



Everything's OK... until it isn't.

During the last week of June, we lost the Financials Reporting database. Several process mistakes (IT-staff human errors) were compounded to bring down the system. That happens... but we're supposed to be able to recover quickly and completely. We were not able to do so because of short-cut procedures and seat-of-pants execution of those procedures. This behavior was an outcome of our staff resource pinch and not a lack of skill, knowledge or caring.

The production Financials database was not affected and the reporting data itself was not lost, but reporting security and all the user-written queries were lost. The recovery process had not been tested since a June '07 PeopleSoft upgrade. We eventually recovered queries from June '07 and converted them to the current PeopleSoft version. Many folks from General Accounting, Grants and Budget worked extra hours to revive the recovered reports, making them ready for general use.

We've fixed all the weak links that led to the failure and met with the core Financials user group to review the processes and backup-and-recovery procedures. We audited other backups to be sure that they are all behaving as expected. Coincidentally, we hired an additional database administrator, who started during the last week of June, to address these kinds of vulnerabilities. He will do more to audit, review and test these procedures.

We apologize to all the folks who depend on this service for timely financial information. This is our fault, we're sick that it has happened, and we'll be sure it doesn't happen again. A previously-stated commitment to addressing IT vulnerabilities will make the broader IT environment more fail-safe. We know we have work to do to regain your trust and confidence.

Coming Soon....

24x7 Database Availability -- Most IT-supported systems are not available around the clock. Many are brought down in the wee hours of the morning for various reasons. With a future of increased international partnership ahead, we have begun to migrate our on-line systems to a 24x7 service schedule. During the Learning Management System migration from WebCT to Sakai, we have configured the Sakai environment to support 24x7 availability. This model will be replicated to bring other essential services online, providing around the clock service in support of global access.

IT Communications Team – A new IT Communications team has been formed to improve our communications with the campus community. Members of the “Comm Team” are Ron Nichols and Kate Webster from User Services, Joy Lynam from Management Information Services, Kathy Beardsley from Network and System Services and Paul Rickards from University Media Services. The team has been charged with four communications responsibilities: the bi-monthly IT activity report, a revamped IT Web site, user feedback surveys and user constituent groups.

Planned Outages

HR/Payroll: To apply tax updates to our Human Resource/Payroll system, we expect to take the system off line one evening in July.

UDSIS: Two bundles of “patches and fixes” from PeopleSoft will require that UDSIS be down for a Saturday in August.

Financials: The Financials system also awaits two bundles of “patches and fixes”, which will be applied over a weekend in August.

Specific dates and times will be published when they are determined.

Security, Privacy, Safety, Etc...

Go Green! -- The GreenIT web site illustrates how IT activities affect the earth. It provides useful insight on the impact that small changes in awareness and practice can have on the environment. GreenIT is updated regularly with new ideas, articles and practices in IT sustainability. Check us out at:

http://www.udel.edu/sustainability/doing/doing_it_green.html

Infrastructure

Online Course Registration Revamped - The newly developed WebReg system streamlines the process of course registration. It makes a student's registration experience faster, easier, and more intuitive than ever before. Some of the many enhancements include: Automation of many tasks previously performed by students, vastly improved notifications to make registration simple and efficient, and an elegant interface implementing the latest Web 2.0 technology. WebReg is currently being used to register incoming freshmen at DelaWorld and will be rolled out to other students during the upcoming academic year. A demo highlighting the WebReg system is available at www.udel.edu/webregdemo.

Teaching & Learning

Faculty Institute -- The 2008 Summer Faculty Institute held June 2-6 set new attendance records and provided participants with a range of new technologies and perspectives. The Institute focused on matching technology tools to learning goals. The week-long program included a mix of presentations and project-oriented workshops from UD faculty, IT staff and off-campus guests. Featured technologies included Sakai, Qualtrics, Second Life, VisualCat, clickers, and multimedia. Podcasts from the Faculty Institute are available at <http://www.udel.edu/present/summer/2008/>

Getting Started with Sakai – Responses to the WebCT migration survey sent to faculty in March showed that many want to begin using Sakai this fall. The Sakai production server is now available for faculty to begin creating courses. IT-User Services is offering optional “Basics of Sakai@UD” classes. Check <http://www.present.udel.edu/calendar> for class schedule.

A training web site that contains self-help resources and other useful information about using Sakai in your teaching is also available. <http://www.udel.edu/sakai/training/>

First High Def Podcast - IT-UMS produced its first podcast in high definition (HD) video in May for the UD Forum's Closing Keynote address which featured remarks from Governor Minner and President Harker. Delivering the podcast in HD enables a larger image, greater clarity and a wide aspect picture. This was made possible through the recent acquisition of new digital HD cameras and recording equipment, which will begin to change the way we capture and deliver digital video. The HD version of the Forum Keynote is available at: http://udcapture.udel.edu/events/udforum2008/udforum-closing_keynote.mp4

Business Systems

Online Bills for Students -- Since 2004 students have had the option of signing up to view and pay bills on the Web. While the last few years have seen a large increase in online payments, paper bills are still produced and mailed and many students still return payment by mail. In May 2008 we began to produce electronic bills for all students. By November 2008 this will be the required method for students to access their billing statements. This change is expected to result in reduced billing costs, reducing mailing costs, a better understanding of charges and more expedient payment. IT and Billing and Collection partnered to deliver this "Green" alternative.

Automated Budget Revisions -- The Automated Budget Revision System is ready for release this month. This system will automatically create budget revisions required based on JED activity. Such revisions are currently manually processed by the Budget Office. The system compares data in the budget to data in payroll and calculates the necessary changes (budget dollars, FTE, Job Codes, UDID) for upload to the University's budget. This system, developed by IT-MIS and the Budget Office will eliminate much manual processing and result in a substantial time-savings.

PeopleSoft Patches and Fixes -- IT has been keeping pace with PeopleSoft's patches and fixes. As mentioned before in "Planned Outages", we need to take down the production environment to apply these fixes and enhancements. We then reapply our UD customizations and modify our UD Web Layer applications. Both IT and core departments spent considerable off-hours time on this task during the reporting period:

Financials: The financials team worked through the weekend of May 5 to apply Financial Bundles 17-20 in order to minimize the impact to campus. This group of bundles saw improvements to SFA billing and pricing of discounts, among many others.

HR/Payroll: HR Maintenance Pack 8 was applied the evening of June 18 to bring us further into compliance. HR is currently testing a recent tax update but we expect at least 4 more tax updates before calendar year end.

UDSIS: We patched UDSIS with Campus Solutions Bundle 14 and an HRMS bundle on the weekend of June 7. These patches primarily impacted Financial Aid with an update for annual changes for the 2008-2009 Aid Year. UDSIS Self Service was the other area impacted with several changes to pages viewed by students, faculty, and staff.

Training

TASK -- The Training for Administrative Systems and Knowledge effort has found a home in the Pearson Hall ITV studios. TASK will partner with IT-UMS/ITV to digitally record highly sought-after training for UD Financials and the Cognos reporting systems. The sessions will be recorded in front of live audiences and will be offered to university staff via the Web. The recordings will feature full motion computer visuals as well as the ability to hear questions from class participants.

Due to heavy demand, TASK has added three additional UD Financials Basics & Background classes for August. The three July classes are fully subscribed with waiting lists. To register for August classes go to <http://www.present.udel.edu/calendar>.

Classrooms/Labs

A New Videoconference/Classroom for Nursing – Opening for the Fall 07 semester, a new videoconferencing room was designed and installed by UMS in 324 Willard Hall. This room will be used for two-way interactive instruction of students located on and off campus. These students can be working nurses who need advanced degrees located in hospitals or even other Colleges or Universities anywhere in the world.

Videoconferencing upgrade for Allen Lab – Plant and Animal Sciences will get a new look to their multipurpose videoconferencing room this May. The new system, designed by UMS will be capable of displaying both near end and far end video simultaneously as well as sending native resolution computer graphics for collaboration.

University Media

Commencement – IT-UMS had all-hands-on-deck during graduation. New this year was a wide stage with a mesh UD logo backdrop incorporating two 16' x 9' LCD outdoor video displays with and new audio tower speakers. We produced a highlights video for graduates that was shown on the outdoor displays prior to the processional, and then provided a 3 camera live switched feed to the screens, a live satellite uplink and a live web stream.

Convocation – IT-UMS was also responsible for technology support at 37 departmental convocations held around campus including those in the BCC, Field House, Carpenter Sports Building, Mitchell and Pearson Hall.

IT Help Center

Activity – The IT Help Center reported 3,145 calls and emails for the months of May and June. This resulted in 1,717 trouble tickets, 549 Network Services requests (140 created by the Help Center) and 370 answered emails that did not result in trouble tickets. Online documentation was accessed 16,553 times through the Help Center's web page (<http://www.udel.edu/help/>) during this time period. Overall Help Center statistics can be found at <http://www.udel.edu/help/stats/>.

Study Abroad Support – The IT Help Center, in conjunction with User Services, created a Technology Support brochure for UD Study Abroad Participants. (<http://www.udel.edu/help/TechSupport08.pdf>) It provides information on voice and data communication options to be considered when working or studying in a foreign location, along with wireless troubleshooting, privacy and safe computing tips. The brochure was distributed to students traveling abroad this summer. An accompanying web site, at <http://www.udel.edu/help/intl.html>, provides more technology-related travel tips and an International Voice Communications Roadmap to help users determine the best fit for meeting their voice communication needs.

Personnel

New Hire: Tyler Howard has just accepted a position as Programmer III in the Network and Systems Services group. Tyler will work on a wide range of systems and network programming projects and comes to us from Pepco Holdings Inc.

New Hire: In June, Aaron Kuehler joined IT-MIS as a Programmer/Analyst. Aaron is a member of the Java programmer group and is contributing to the Sakai learning management system. Aaron graduated Magna Cum Laude from West Chester University in 2006 and has been a Java developer for AdminServer, Inc for the last two years.

New Hire: In June, Dennis Hyland became a member of MIS as a Database Administrator. Dennis, from Progressive Software Consulting Inc. has been working with our DBA group as a consultant on several projects and comes with an extended background in Oracle database administration.

Changes: Gwen Jones, support staff in the office of the VP for IT, has moved to Network and Systems Services. Cathy Painter, IT-NSS, has moved to the network group from data entry.

Open Positions: Searches are underway for a GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Programmer, Audio Engineering Technician and Graphic Design Animator.